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ABSTRACT

Descriptons of familiar birds of the Midwest and suggestions for attracting them to urban settings are offered in this publication. Plants which serve as food and protection for birds are identified. These plants are described by: the number of bird species that use the plant; the plant's ornamental value; its time in bloom and in fruit; its height; and its adaptations. Practical ideas are outlined for attracting birds to homes and gardens. A model of a conservation landscape design plan is offered and illustrated. Considerations and comments are directed to birds' needs and water areas, living screens, open areas, winter protection, living fences, and food plots. A list of pamphlets on plants, soils, and conservation methods is also provided. (ML)

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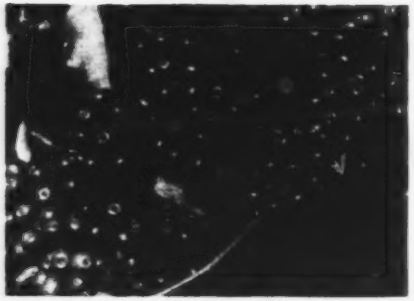
Invite birds to your home

conservation plantings for the midwest

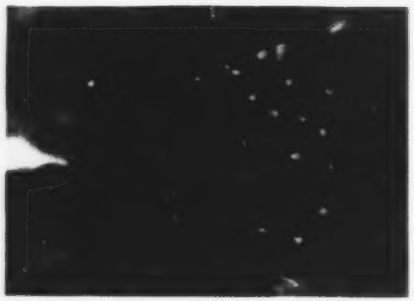
PLANTS FOR BIRDS, BEAUTY, PROTECTION



AUTUMN-OLIVE ***Elaeagnus umbellata***

Bird use: 15 species
Ornamental values: Large, spreading shrub with gray-green foliage; fragrant, small, yellowish blooms; abundant red fruits.

Adaptations: Moist to dry soil; sun to light shade; Cardinal variety, winter hardy.
In bloom: May-July *In fruit:* September-December *Height:* 8–15 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, several state nurseries.



DOGWOOD ***Cornus* spp.**
Silky dogwood illus.

Bird use: 47 species
Ornamental values: Variable forms: small to large shrubs, small trees; leaves strongly veined, red to bronze in fall; small blooms in showy, whitish to yellowish, flat clusters or bunched inside four creamy bracts; fruits bunched or clustered — red, blue, or white.

Adaptations: Moist to well-drained soil; sun to shade. *Height:* shrub, 5–8 ft.;
In bloom: April-June *In fruit:* August-February tree, 20–30 ft.
Sources: Commercial and state nurseries, wilding transplants, cuttings.

MOUNTAIN-ASH ***Sorbus* spp.**

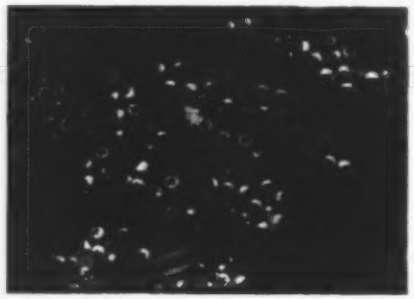
Bird use: 20 species
Ornamental values: Medium-size trees with compound leaves; flat, white flower clusters; bright red to orange berry clusters.

Adaptations: Moist to dry soil; sun; cool climate.
In bloom: May-June *In fruit:* August-March *Height:* 20–40 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants.

RUSSIAN-OLIVE ***Elaeagnus angustifolia***

Bird use: 31 species
Ornamental values: Large shrub to small tree; introduced species widely established in dry alkaline sites in West; silvery-yellow to pink fruits persist nearly whole winter; narrow green leaves silvery below.

Adaptations: Well-drained to dry soil; sun.
In bloom: June-July *In fruit:* September-February *Height:* 15–25 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants.



FIRETHORN ***Pyracantha* spp.**

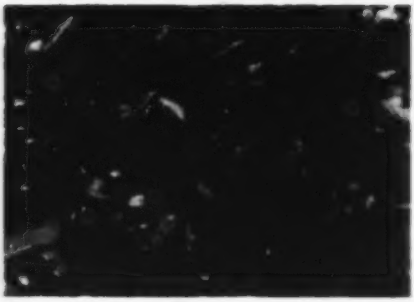
Bird use: 17 species
Ornamental values: Medium to large shrubs; white blooms; showy orange to red fruits.

Adaptations: Moist to well-drained soil; sun to partial shade.
In bloom: June *In fruit:* September-March *Height:* 6–12 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries.

SUNFLOWER ***Helianthus* spp.**

Bird use: 52 species
Ornamental values: Tall annual plant; has large yellow flowers.

Adaptations: Well-drained soil; sun.
In bloom: June-August *Ripe seed:* August-September *Height:* 4–8 ft.
Sources: Commercial seed stores.



CRABAPPLE ***Malus* spp.**

Bird use: 29 species
Ornamental values: Small to medium-size trees; showy white to pink blooms; fruits are red, purple, orange, or yellow.

Adaptations: Well-drained soil; sun to light shade.
In bloom: April-May *In fruit:* September-April *Height:* 10–30 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, grafting, budding.

ELDERBERRY ***Sambucus* spp.**
American elder illus.

Bird use: 50 species
Ornamental values: Tall shrubs; blooms in flat, whitish clusters; red to purple-black fruits.

Adaptations: Moist to well-drained soil; sun to shade.
In bloom: May-July *In fruit:* July-October *Height:* 5–8 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries.

AMERICAN CRANBERRYBUSH
(highbush cranberry)
Viburnum trilobum

Bird use: 28 species
Ornamental values: Upright, tall shrub; showy flat clusters of whitish flowers; glossy scarlet fruit clusters.

Adaptations: Deep, moist to well-drained soil; sun to light shade.
In bloom: May-June *In fruit:* September-May *Height:* 8–12 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, some state nurseries, wilding transplants, cuttings.

CHERRY — *Prunus* spp.

Bird use: 49 species
Ornamental values: Variable forms: shrubs, small to large trees; small fine-toothed leaves, yellow in fall; showy white flower clusters or drooping spikes; small bright-red to black fruits. *Height:* shrub, 5–15 ft.; tree, 20–75 ft.
Adaptations: Moist to dry soil; sun to light shade.
In bloom: April-June *In fruit:* Variable with species, June-November.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants.

WILD PLUM — *Prunus americana*

Bird use: 16 species
Ornamental values: Large shrub to small tree; suited to large yards or fields; spreads by suckers to form clumps; fragrant pink and white flowers; hardy red or yellow fruits.
Adaptations: Moist to well-drained loamy soil; sun.
In bloom: April-May *In fruit:* July-October *Height:* 10–30 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants.

FAMILIAR BIRDS and their preferred foods

COTONEASTER — *Cotoneaster* spp.

Bird use: 6 species
Ornamental values: Generally medium-size shrubs; usually planted as a hedge but also as ground cover; dark-green leaves turning red-gold in fall; small pink or white flowers; showy red, orange, or black fruits.
Adaptations: Moist to well-drained soil; sun.
In bloom: May-June *In fruit:* September-November *Height:* 2–10 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries.

TATARIAN HONEYSUCKLE — *Lonicera tatarica*

Bird use: 18 species
Ornamental values: Large shrub; pink to yellow-white blooms; yellow to red fruits.
Adaptations: Well-drained to dry soil; sunlight to light shade.
In bloom: May-June *In fruit:* July-September *Height:* 5–15 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries.

BLUE JAY

acorns, cherry, sunflower, wild plum, cultivated grains

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

apple, cherry, elderberry, mountain-ash, various berries

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

mulberry, sunflowers, seeds of garden flowers, weeds, and conifers

REDCEDAR ***Juniperus virginiana***

Bird use: 25 species
Ornamental values: Medium-size coniferous tree (many varieties); dense, green to blue-green needles; small dusty-blue, berrylike cones.
Adaptations: Moist to dry soil; sun to light shade.
In bloom: April-May *In fruit:* September-May *Height:* 15–40 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, some state nurseries, wilding transplants.

BITTERSWEET ***Celastrus scandens***

Bird use: 12 species
Ornamental values: Twining vine; pale-green flowers; bright-red berries in yellow or orange husks.
Adaptations: Well-drained to dry soil; light shade.
In bloom: May-June *In fruit:* September-December *Height:* climbs to 25 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, some state nurseries, cuttings.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

nectar of columbine, delphinium, petunia, trumpetcreeper

CARDINAL

autumn-olive, corn, dogwood, sunflower, various berries

MOCKINGBIRD

autumn-olive, elderberry, firethorn, highbush cranberry, holly

HOLLY ***Ilex* spp.**

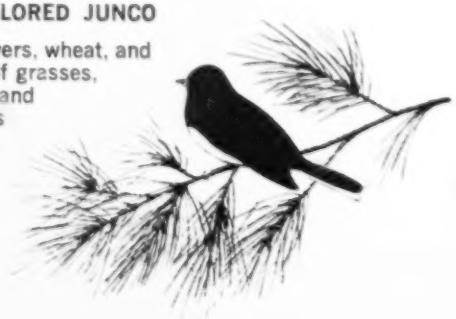
Bird use: 20 species
Ornamental values: Variable forms: upright rounded shrubs, small to medium-size trees; many varieties; dark-green foliage, evergreen or deciduous; small whitish blooms; bright-red, black, or yellow fruits (very persistent).
Adaptations: Moist to well-drained soil; sun to shade.
In bloom: April-June *In fruit:* September-May *Height:* shrub, 5–15 ft.; tree, 30–50 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries, wilding transplants, cuttings.

HAWTHORN ***Crataegus* spp.**

Bird use: 19 species
Ornamental values: Small trees; pale-green toothed leaves; abundant, clustered, white flowers; orange to red fruits (very persistent).
Adaptations: Deep, moist to dry soil; sun to shade.
In bloom: May-June *In fruit:* October-March *Height:* 15–30 ft.
Sources: Commercial nurseries.

SLATE-COLORED JUNCO

sunflowers, wheat, and seeds of grasses, weeds, and conifers



ROBIN

cherry, cotoneaster, dogwood, Russian-olive, various berries

EASTERN BLUEBIRD

dogwood, honeysuckle, mountain-ash, redcedar, various berries

Invite birds

By Wade H.Hamor, biologist, SCS

Birds are good neighbors. Their songs, colors, and lively activities add much to the joys of suburban or near-suburban living. They also help us control insects that attack flowers, lawns, gardens, and people.

You know about manmade bird attractors—feeders, birdbaths, birdhouses, nesting shelves, and the like. Let's consider some natural attractors—trees, shrubs, and vines—you can grow to invite birds to your home and garden.

Plantings can beautify your land as well as attract birds. Birds often feed on berries, and many of their favorites are bright-hued and decorative. Hedges and other dense shrubbery provide shelter and fit handsomely in the background scene. Trees for nesting and singing offer shade and beauty to the householder. Sunflowers and other colorful annuals are seed producers. A small wildlife pool is an attractive addition.

Meet the Birds' Needs

Birds have simple needs—they look for places to feed, sing, court, nest, rest, and hide. As you do your landscaping, you can provide these places with mixtures of trees, shrubs, vines, and other plants. Even in small yards, the right choice of plantings can meet many of these needs.

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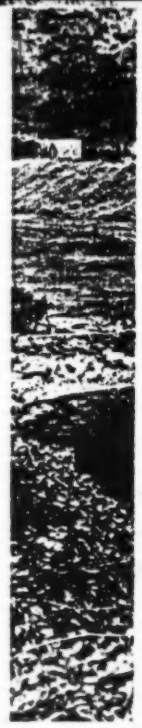
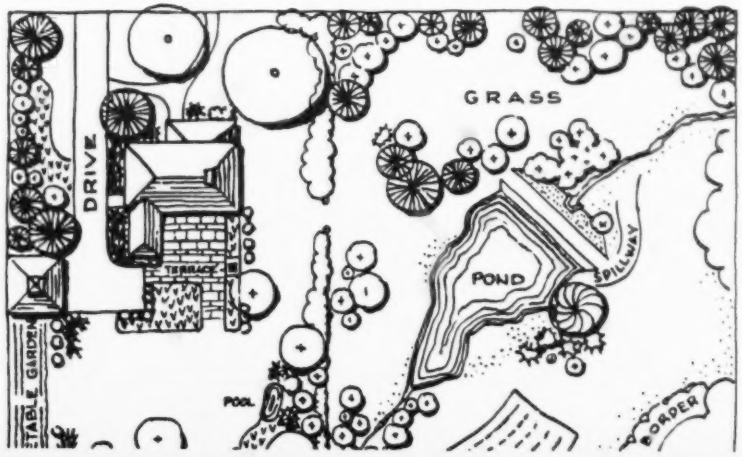


Create a Landscape Design

You have endless choices of combinations to consider in creating a conservation landscape design: hardwoods and conifers; vines, shrubs, and trees; grasses; flowers; even weeds. If your yard is small, you may be limited to single specimens of different plants. With much larger grounds, you can use hedges, clumps, food plots, and other massed plantings. If you have a wooded area, a small clearing within it can create more edges for birds and lend variety to the landscape.

The upper left part of this design suggests plantings and their arrangement for a moderately large suburban house and lot. The rest of the design shows features that could be added for a larger tract. Your choice in species and their arrangement and placing will depend on your space.

Be sure your landscaping allows you to **see** the birds. Put the plants where they can be seen from a window, patio, or terrace. For best results, choose the kinds of plants reported to have high bird use. Careful attention to periods of bloom and the availability of choice foods makes it possible to have a succession of floral displays and bird foods throughout the year.



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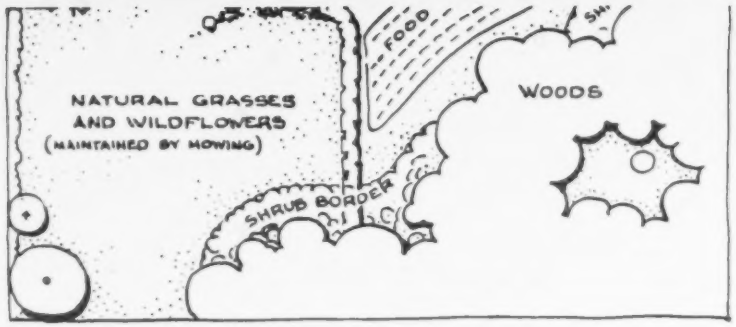
Mix and Blend Plants

Birds like variety—remember this when deciding what plants to use in your conservation-planned landscaping. Create a varied pattern with an intermingling of species, sizes, and shapes. Give birds a choice of places for their activities—from the crowns of tall trees down to low-growing flowers and grasses. Give them a choice of food sources—seeds, nuts, fruits, berries, and flower nectar. Many songbirds combine these plant foods with animal foods like insects, worms, and spiders.

Choose Plants of Wildlife Value

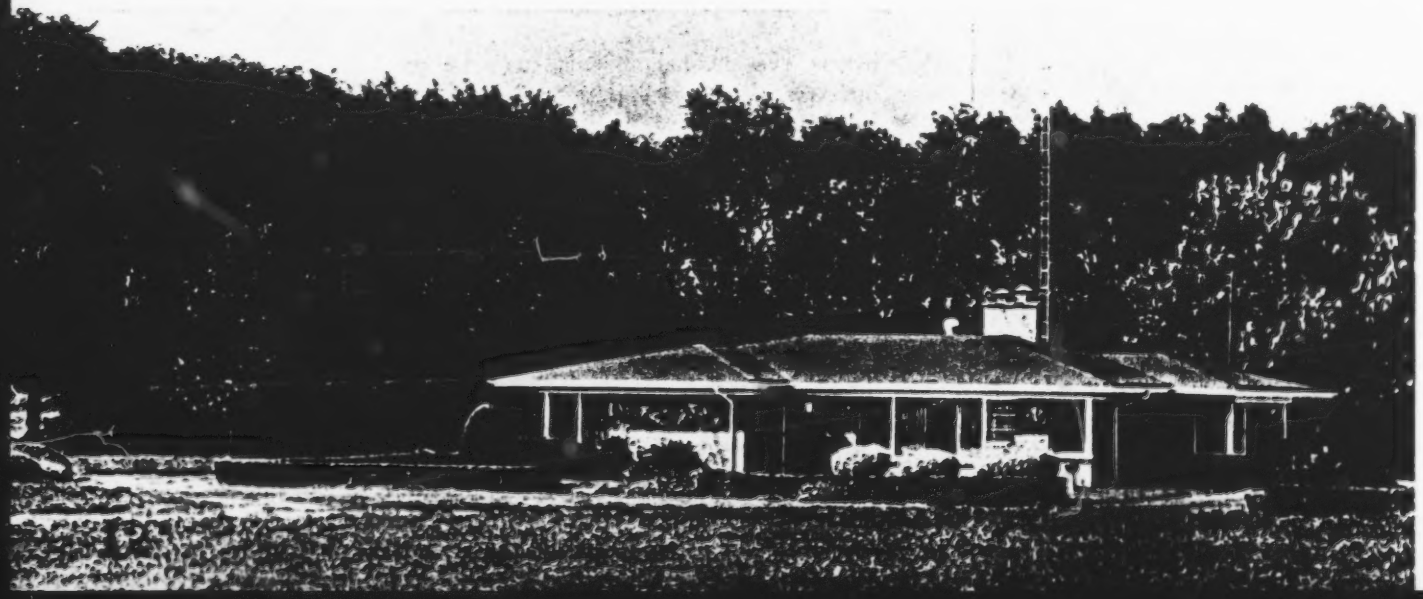
By knowing the wildlife value of plants you now have, you can plan additional plantings that will bring a diversity of plant forms, food producers, and shelter plants that would otherwise be missing. Many common shade trees and landscape shrubs, for example, yield little food for birds. Autumn-olive, cherry, or good fruit-bearing shrubs are helpful additions. Yards and grounds that have only deciduous trees and shrubs can be improved by adding junipers, cedars, yews, and other evergreens that provide winter shelter for birds.

Plants in this brochure are adapted and useful in the Midwest from Michigan and Indiana west to the Dakotas and Kansas.



LEGEND

- Pool or birdbath
- Flowerbed
- Shade tree
- Large conifer
- Low conifer
- Ornamental or garden shrubs
- Shrubs for birds
- Trees for birds
- Shrub hedge
- Weeping willow
- Woodland clearing
- Natural or planted hedgerow
- Conifer screen with planted shrub borders



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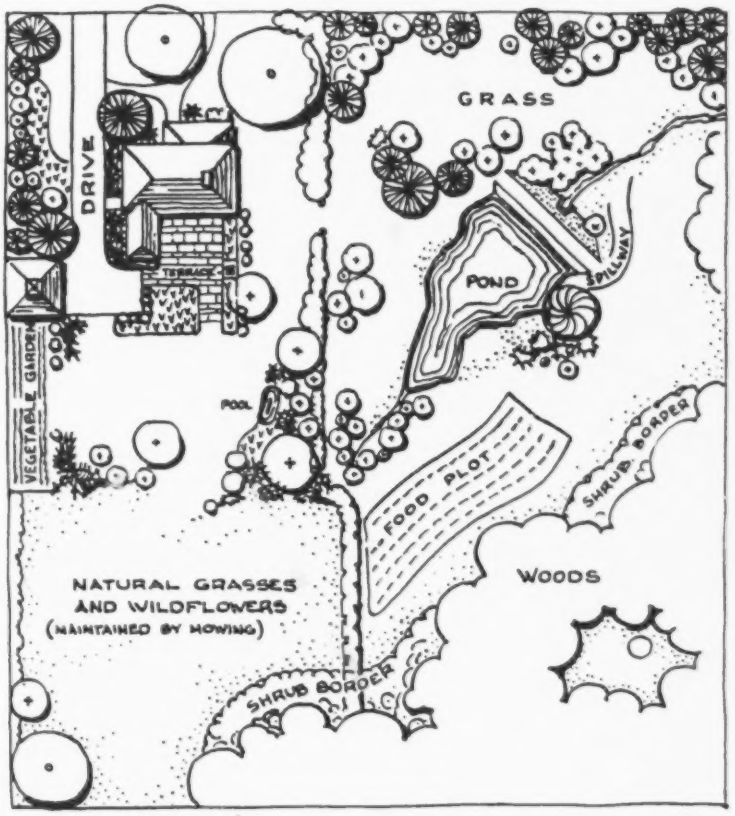

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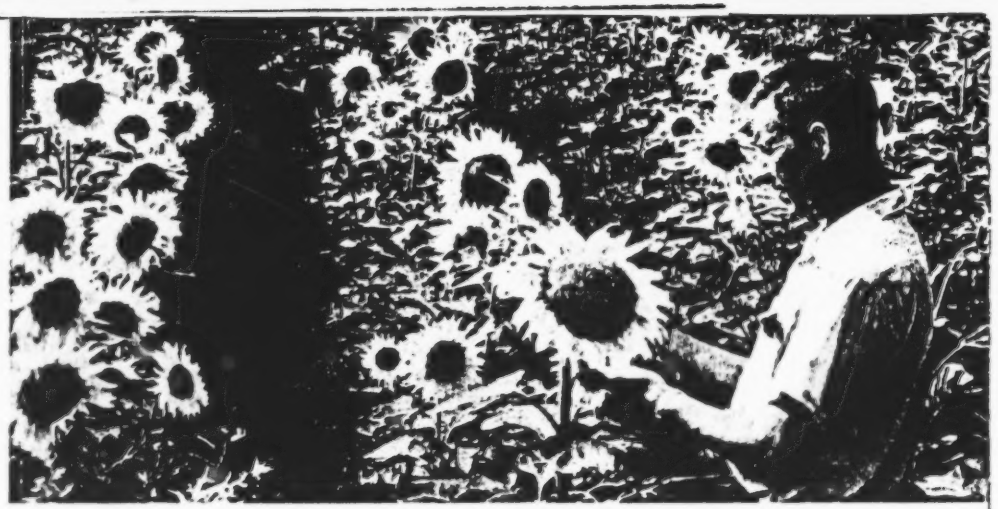
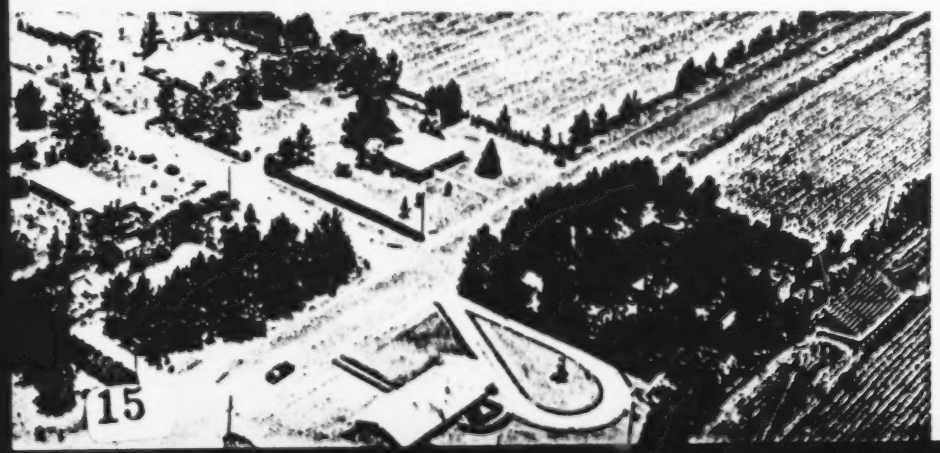
ways of attracting birds



Food Plots.—"Seedeaters," such as goldfinches, cardinals, juncos, and sparrows, come to food plots of millets, grain sorghum, corn, or sunflowers; all are good bird foods to plant. Wild bristlegrasses and ragweeds also attract many birds. Plots can be small, perhaps several short rows, or large if you have the space.

Water Areas.—Most birds need open water of some kind. A small pool with stones in the shallow edges draws birds to drink and bathe. They use the dry tops of the rocks for preening sites after bathing. A pond may attract some water birds at all seasons but most often during spring and fall migrations. Landscape the pond area with conifers, clumps of shrubs, and hedges for resting, nesting, and feeding. Encourage some aquatic growth along part of the shoreline but control its spread.



The Basic Resources—Soil and Water

When planting for birds, you need to consider such things as soil, slope, drainage, exposure aspects, and climate as well as your personal wishes. Added benefits occur where plantings help provide shade, stabilize soil, and control potentially damaging water runoff.

In general, trees and shrubs that attract birds grow satisfactorily on well-drained, fairly fertile, somewhat loamy soils not particularly suited for vegetables and flowers. The ideal soil has a loose, loamy upper layer 18 inches or more deep. A neutral or slightly acid reaction is preferred.

When your house, street, sidewalk, and driveway were built, the normal pattern of water flow was changed and likely the runoff rate increased. Careful landscape planning can handle the extra water and check soil erosion. Plants described in this pamphlet that attract birds also help control soil erosion and water runoff.

Living Screens.—Hedges and rows of trees screen off unpleasant views and reduce noise from highways. In crowded neighborhoods they offer privacy for your backyard activities. And they attract birds to your place year after year. Conifers, autumn-olive, dogwood, cotoneaster, or a combination of these make good living screens.

Open Areas.—Meadowlarks, bobolinks, and several kinds of sparrows favor open stretches of lawn and fields with few if any trees or shrubs. In seldom-mowed open areas, try planting a variety of native grasses. They protect the soil, and birds and mammals like the variety of foods.

Winter Protection.—A windbreak of cedars, spruce, or pines with a crabapple tree tucked in on the sheltered side gives birds a warm, safe place to rest when the snow is deep. A food plot or feeder nearby helps keep the birds with you through the snowy months.

Living Fences.—Hedges or rows of honeysuckle, dogwood, or autumn-olive can replace a wire fence between fields, can divide up fields, and can protect the house area. Cardinals, brown thrashers, and mockingbirds find living fences ideal.

Harmonize with Manmade Structures

Try to blend your plantings with your house, walkways, and rock walls into a total landscape design. Put the permanent trees and shrubs in places where their roots will not interefere with masonry structures. Use annual species to provide more kinds of bird feeds, to balance landscape spacing, and to fill in along manmade structures. Planting on the contour adds natural beauty in pleasing patterns and helps control soil erosion and water runoff.

Bird houses, baths, and feeders can supplement the plantings to make your yard even more inviting. Select the kinds that blend in with your landscaping; the more simple and natural they look, the better they are. Feeders with fruits and grains are food sources in late winter after fruits from your plantings have been depleted. Certain kinds of nesting houses and shelves attract certain kinds of birds. The houses to select depend on what species nest nearby. But equally important is how urbanized your area is—some birds like city life but others do not.

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FOR HELP

You can get further information on plants, soils, and conservation methods at your local soil and water conservation district office. The Soil Conservation Service, as part of its assistance to conservation districts, helps people apply many conservation practices that increase wildlife. County agents, commercial nurserymen, landscape architects, and bird societies can also help.

U.S. Department of Agriculture pamphlets that may be helpful are:

- Autumn Olive (L–458)
- Gardening on the Contour (H&G–179)
- Making Land Produce Useful Wildlife (FB–2035)
- More Wildlife Through Soil and Water Conservation (AIB–175)
- Ponds and Marshes for Wild Ducks on Farms and Ranches in the Northern Plains (FB–2234)
- Soil Conservation at Home (AIB–244)
- Windbreaks for Conservation (AIB–339)

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